

# WE CAN ALL GET ALONG

## Faithful flourish in Kensington's melting pot

By Mat Probasco  
 for The Brooklyn Paper

From Gothic cathedral spires and towering synagogues to tiny storefront mosques, it's hard to get around Kensington without bumping into some manifestation of holiness. Faith lurks on nearly every corner. And more often than not, the inoffensive addresses its faithful along cultural lines in this famously diverse area. Howling Hispanics called out for Jesus behind the dirty glass windows of a cramped tile-floor Pentecostal church on Newark Avenue every Sunday. Inside, a tiny toddler boy put a tambourine on his head — crown of thorns-style. A block away, a litter of children's shoes lined the steps of See FAITHIEST on page 5



**THE CROSSROADS OF FAITH:** Khalifa Hassan, a native of Pakistan, worships at the Al-Mahdi Foundation mosque (far left) on Coney Island Avenue, just blocks away from the International Baptist Church (center), where pastor John Morgan leads the congregation, also just blocks away from the Inglesia Pentecostal on Church Avenue (far right).



Levana Kirschenbaum leads a kosher cooking class in Prospect Heights last week.

## Matzo meal

### The best holiday food is the kind that takes you home

By Jordana Rothman  
 for The Brooklyn Paper

My mother once said, "Passover food is all about not trying too hard." Her caveat wasn't about effort, though. It was about bravado. It was the response she offered when I suggested subbing braised short ribs for brisket, classic French quenelles for gefilte fish or crusty filets of mahi mahi with matzo meal and crushed sage. It was her way of suggesting that Passover is about honoring tradition, not about reinventing it. "Not trying too hard" leaves room for the gelatinous texture and briny sting of gefilte fish, the robust nuances of braised meat and

the dimension of a kugel as its crisp upper crust falls away to reveal its savory, meaty interior. There's a time and place for experimentation, but for many, the Passover table, where first they lusted after a thumbful of Manischewitz, is a place to return to the familiar flavors of their youth. At my house, rolled into each matzo ball and seared into each brisket is a meandering family history, begun on the shores of the Black Sea and stretching from Queens and Brooklyn to New Jersey and Boca Raton. The recipes are ancient and thick with history; the aromas curling forth from the oven are unchanged, the flavors as evocative and nostalgic as any family album.

See MATZO on page 10

## Faith in Brooklyn

### SPECIAL ISSUE

Welcome to our second annual "Faith in Brooklyn" special issue, published on the eve of Easter and Passover. But this week's Paper isn't just a Judeo-Christian celebration. As in last year's collector's edition, we're exploring faith in the broadest sense of the word. Inside, stories look at the borough's "faithiest" neighborhood (Kensington, above), Passover cooking (at left), the ancient Chinese art of tai chi (see page 6), houses of worship where gays and lesbians are welcome (see page 3), an atheist who is proud of her beliefs (see page 5), and our nation's shocking lack of religious literacy (see page 3). Even Smartmorm gets into the act, with a review of a "Passover Haggadah for Buddhists — and Jews" (see page 13). Enjoy — and have faith.



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Page 3

# State: We never saw Yards number\$

By Ariella Cohen  
 The Brooklyn Paper

State officials admitted this week that when they approved Atlantic Yards last year they were relying on documents that were incomplete — and may have even been in violation of Bruce Ratner's original pact with the state and city. The documents contained Ratner's cash-flow projections and other information required under the original Atlantic Yards Memorandum of Understanding, but lacked other key financial details of the project's arena, 6,000 housing units and hundreds of thousands of square feet of commercial development. The information in the documents had been provided by Ratner to the accounting giant KPMG, which made its own assumptions about the accuracy of the information. The company, whose work was paid for by Ratner, said it verified the Ratner-provided data "to the extent possible." Ratner's failure to provide a comprehensive plan appears to violate the 2005 MOU, which was signed by the developer, Mayor Bloomberg and Gov. Patrizi. That document mandated a public review of a "financing and operating plan" in exchange for political support and \$200 million from the city and the state (since raised to \$305 million). The missing business plan was first reported by the New York Sun this week. The disclosure that the ESDC approved Atlantic Yards without seeing Ratner's full

## Ratner set to demolish his 'Ward'

By Ariella Cohen  
 The Brooklyn Paper

Bruce Ratner is about to tear down the most historic building in the footprint of Atlantic Yards, but he's doing it green! The developer began prepping the Empire State Development Corporation — will not be saved, but it will live on in a very different form. Three-quarters of the rubble will be recycled. "We are seeking out every possible way to make Atlantic Yards as eco-friendly and environmentally responsible as possible," Ratner said in the statement. But Ratner's green thumb is not just a matter of environmental stewardship, but also his bottom line. In New York State, builders who meet certain criteria for energy and waste efficiency can claim up to \$7.50

per square foot against their state tax bill, saving them hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Ratner's opponents slammed the developer for destroying the building — which was once

called a "snow-white temple of bread-making cleanliness," but more recently was seen as the

great white hope of those who sought to block Atlantic Yards.

Built in 1911, it is recognizable by its ornamental arches and terra cotta facade, an edifice that, if polished, would shine. "It was an integral part of the Prospect Heights landscape that we didn't think had to be crushed," said Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn spokesman Daniel Goldstein, who was part of the fight to save the structure. But the ESDC said that it was "not practicable" to reuse it, and Ratner has said he can't build his \$4-billion Atlantic Yards with the Ward plant in his way.

The bakery demolition is only a small part of this phase of Atlantic Yards. In a rush to complete his Frank Gehry-designed basketball arena in time for the 2009 season, Ratner has his sights on tearing down 15 buildings on Pacific Street, between Fifth and Sixth avenues; on Dean Street; and on Flatbush, Atlantic and Vanderbilt avenues. In a letter sent to local community boards last week, a Ratner spokesperson said that the demolitions would take six months to complete.

business plan comes after months of pressure from opponents and Brooklyn public officials who criticized the state for failing to release the full financial review of the largest development in the borough's history. Assemblyman Jim Brennan (D-Park Slope) and state Sen. Velmanette Montgomery (D-Park Slope) sent the ESDC to get the full review. Now it turns out that the state never had it to provide — and local politicians are furious. "The state should have known everything there is to know about the project and disclosed it to the public," said Sam Rockwell, a spokesman for Councilman David Yassky (D-Brooklyn Heights). "The fact that they didn't even have the first step completed doesn't reflect well." ESDC spokesman Errol Cockfield denied state officials ignored their own MOU. The previous administration "felt comfortable" relying on the KPMG report, he said. "The financial documents I met the test for the previous administration to forward [the project] to the state for approval," he said. The KPMG report projects that Ratner will walk away with a \$400-million profit from his state-backed \$4-billion Prospect Heights Xanadu. Brennan said he had used to see the financial documents because they are important to backing up — or dispelling — Ratner's claim that the project needs to be so big in order to allow him to build the basketball arena and 2,250 units of below-market-rate housing. This information is absolutely relevant to anyone seeking to amend this project at all," Brennan said. Forest City Ratner did not respond to questions from The Brooklyn Paper.



The former Wards Bakery, eligible for a spot on the National Registry of Historic Places, will be demolished by owner Bruce Ratner starting this week.

**THE stoop**  
 WILL RETURN NEXT WEEK

# Marco Polo RISTORANTE

## Celebrate Easter

SUNDAY, APRIL 8TH

\$34<sup>95</sup> per person  
\$18<sup>95</sup> per child  
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Insalata Organica • Mozzarella Fresca • Cocktail di Gamberi (additional \$4.95)  
Grilled Vegetable Napoleon • Traditional Hot Antipasto  
Portobello sauté con Polenta

### ZUPPE & PASTA

Minestrone • Lobster Bisque  
Penne with fresh tomato & basil  
Angel hair with shrimps and asparagus in pink sauce  
Risotto with an array of seafood & diced tomatoes  
Baked homemade pasta with mushrooms, meatballs, basil & tomato sauce

### ENTRÉE

Spring baby lamb, seasoned with rosemary served with red bliss potatoes  
Salmon topped with breadcrumbs & herbs  
Tilapia fish sautéed with capers & lemon  
Chicken breast sautéed & topped with asparagus, mozzarella & tomato  
Veal scaloppini topped with prosciutto, mozzarella, eggplant & tomato in a brown sauce  
Grilled sirloin steak (additional \$5.95)

Coffee \*\* Pastiera \*\* Assorted Desserts  
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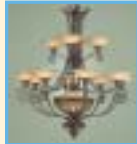
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# LOST IN YONKERS

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# WHERE TO GO

## EDITORS' PICKS

**SATURDAY**  
March 31

### Taking shots

Tonight Brooklyn Papers shutterbug Daniel Krieger (pictured), whose work you can catch on page 1, opens his solo show, "8 Dreams," at Mini Bar. We're happy for him, of course, but we hope he doesn't stop returning our calls!

7 pm at Mini Bar (482 Court St. at Fourth Place in Carroll Gardens). For information, visit [www.danielkrieger.com](http://www.danielkrieger.com).

**SUNDAY**  
April 1

### Norway to go

This year's Miss Norway of Greater NY and Miss Norwegian Heritage will be chosen where? In Brooklyn, of course. The tri-state competition will bring 16 prom dress-wearing ladies to the borough, selecting finalists based on their smarts, looks and ambition.

2 pm at Norwegian Christian Home & Health Center (1250 67 St. at 12th Avenue in Coney Heights). For information, call (718) 504-4633.



**MONDAY**  
April 2

### Magnetic blues

Brooklyn Heights rock shop Magnetic Field continues its local music series, which features one band playing one set and a crowd fueled by \$1 beer. Be a sport and buy a drink for tonight's performer, local bluesman Nate Farrar.

8 pm at Magnetic Field (97 Atlantic Ave. at Henry Street in Brooklyn Heights). Free. For information, call (718) 834-0069.

**WEDNESDAY**  
April 4

### Spunk Rock

Fight Atlantic Yards and rock out at Southpaw hosts a Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn benefit show. Vintage British band the Spunk Lads do their reunion show shtick after opening act Searchai & The Unity Squad confuse everyone with their Irish hip-hop.

8 pm at Southpaw (125 Fifth Ave. at Sterling Place in Park Slope). \$15. For information, call (718) 230-0236.



**FRIDAY**  
April 6

### Living legend

The last time we caught blues giant Danny Kalb at Barbes, the "Blues Project" frontman covered everything from Lead Belly to a song from "The Sound of Music." Expect more of the same from this true giant — and Park Slope resident.

8 pm at Barbes (376 Ninth St. at Sixth Avenue in Park Slope). Suggested donation, \$10. For information, call (718) 965-9177.

# NINE DAYS IN BROOKLYN

Compiled by Susan Rosenthal Joy

## SAT, MARCH 31

### OUTDOORS AND TOURS

**SALT MARSH:** Urban Park Rangers host an early morning birding walk. 8 am. Salt Marsh Nature Center, 3302 Ave. U. Call 311 for info. Free.

**FORT GREENE PARK:** In honor of Women's History Month, the Urban Park Rangers host a talk on the significant roles women played in the American Revolution. 1 pm. Meet at the Visitor's Center, near the Myrtle Avenue and Washington Park entrance. Call 311 for info. Free.

**GREENWOOD CEMETERY:** Big Orion Tours explores Brooklyn's landmark cemetery. City of the Dead. 12, 50 students. 1 pm. Meet at main entrance, Fifth Avenue and 25th Street. (212) 439-1090.

**COBBLE HILL TOUR:** Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment offers a tour from Cobble Hill to the Columbia Street waterfront. \$13. \$10 members. \$8 students and seniors. 2 pm to 4 pm. Meet at southwest corner of Court and Cross streets. (718) 788-8500.

### PERFORMANCE

**PIANO MUSIC:** Lorraine D. Westcott, pianist, performs. Music by Chopin, Schumann, Brahms, Beethoven and Debussy. 1:30 pm. Brooklyn Public Library's Brooklyn Heights branch, 280 Cadman Plaza West. (718) 623-7100. Free.

**REGGAE CONCERT:** Center for Black Literature and National Black Writers Conference in conjunction with the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce presents "Redemption Song: A Tribute to Bob Marley. Lyrical Poet." \$10. \$5. 2 pm. Medgar Evers College, 1650 Bedford Ave. (718) 270-6776.

**BOOK EVENT:** Vox Pop presents "A Game As Old As Empire," by James H. Jones. 3 pm to 7 pm. 1022 Cortelyou Rd. (718) 940-2084. Free.

**DANCE:** Company XVI hosts a dance theater program of choreography, musical composition, poetry and fashion. Contemporary dance is paired with poetry of Charles Bukowski and Arias of Vivid. 5:15. 7 pm. 303 Bond St. For reservations, email to [reservations@companyxvi.com](mailto:reservations@companyxvi.com).

**CONCERT READING:** American Opera Projects presents "The Summer King" and "The Wall-to-Wall." \$15. \$12 seniors and students. 7:30 pm. Post-performance discussion. South Oxford Space, 138 S. Oxford Pl. (718) 398-4024.

**BAM:** Brooklyn Academy of Music presents "Edward Scissorhands," based on Tim Burton's film. \$30 to \$80. 2 pm and 7:30 pm. Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. Also, "The Taming of the Shrew," by Shakespeare. \$25 to \$65. 2:30 pm. Additionally, "Twelfth Night." \$25 to \$65. 7:30 pm. Harvey Theater, 651 Fulton St. (718) 636-4100.

**FACULTY SHOWCASE:** Brooklyn Conservatory of Music presents soprano Christine Moore in a recital of Spanish songs. \$10. \$5 students and seniors. 8 pm. 58 Seventh Ave. (718) 622-3300.

**MUSICAL:** The Ridge Chorale Samaha Productions presents "West Side Story." \$23. 8 pm. Richard Ferry Theater at Poly Prep, 9216 Seventh Ave. (718) 775-9056.



**Ka-Bloom:** The Brooklyn Botanic Garden begins its Hanami cherry blossom celebration on April 7. Hanami culminates with Sakura Matsuri, a two-day family festival of Japanese culture, arts and performances for all ages.

**GALLERY PLAYERS:** presents Molere's "The Learned Ladies." \$18. \$14 seniors and kids. 8 pm. 199 14th St. (718) 595-0547.

**BARGE MUSIC:** presents Concerti Concert featuring classical music of Vivaldi. \$50. \$25 students. 8 pm. Fulton Ferry Landing, Old Fulton Street at the East River. (718) 624-2083.

**CHILDREN**  
**BARNES AND NOBLE:** hosts a storytime featuring kids' favorites. 11 am. 106 Court St. (718) 246-4996. Free.

**ARTY FACTS:** Today, "Shapes and Patterns." Ages 4 to 7. \$8 adults, free for members and children 12 and younger. 11 am and 2 pm. Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Pkwy. (718) 638-5000. Free.

**OPENING DAY:** NYC hosts its largest Little League parade. 10 am. Seventh Avenue and Canal Street. (718) 965-9594. Free.

**OTHER**  
**FOCUS ON WOMEN:** Brooklyn Women's Services hosts its 11th annual women's symposium in honor of Women's History Month. Speakers include Dr. Joy Carol, author of "The Fabric of Friendship: Celebrating the Joys, Mending the Tears in Women's Relationships." Also,

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For religious events, see our special calendar on page 10

Cookie Melendez, nationally self-defense expert speaks. Register 8:30 am to 9:30 am. Program runs from 9:30 am to 11 am. Call bags given to the first 100 participants who attend. Sinco's Restaurant, 8023 13th Ave. Pre-registration necessary. (718) 748-1234. Free.

**SYMPOSIUM:** Brooklyn Museum presents "Feminist Mapping: A Young Person's Guide to a Spiritual Life." \$15. \$10 students and seniors. 10 am to 5 pm. 200 Eastern Pkwy. (718) 638-5000.

**CHARITY WALK:** Walk for Autism Research hosts an evening reception for "Bleeding Heart." 6 pm to 8 pm. 200 Eastern Pkwy. (718) 638-5000.

**MEET THE ARTIST:** Underbridge Pictures hosts a closing reception for "Bleeding Heart." 6 pm to 8 pm. 200 Eastern Pkwy. (718) 638-5000.

**SUN, APRIL 1**  
**Palm Sunday**  
**OUTDOORS**

**SEASON BEGINS:** Prospect Park opens its carousel, electric boat tours, and Prospect Park Zoo for the season. Visit [www.prospectpark.org](http://www.prospectpark.org).

**NEIGHBORHOOD SERIES:** Monthly walking tour series focuses on Brooklyn Neighborhoods. Today: Park Slope. 11 am. Meet at the southwest corner of Flatbush Avenue and Bergen Street. Call 311 for info. Free.

**HISTORIC TOURS:** Explore the history of Fort Green Park. Meet at the Urban Park Rangers. 1 pm. Fort Greene Visitor Center, Myrtle Avenue and Washington Park Entrance. Call 311 for info. Free.

**PERFORMANCE**  
**PLATFORM SERIES:** Brooklyn Arts Exchange presents "Seeking Meaning: A Young Person's Guide to a Spiritual Life." \$15. \$10 students and seniors. 10 am to 5 pm. 200 Eastern Pkwy. (718) 638-5000.

**BAM:** Brooklyn Academy of Music presents "The Summer King" and "The Wall-to-Wall." \$15. \$12 seniors and students. 7:30 pm. Post-performance discussion. South Oxford Space, 138 S. Oxford Pl. (718) 398-4024.

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**PUBLISHERS**  
Celia Weintraub (ext 104) • Ed Weintraub (ext 105)  
**EDITOR** Gerah Kuntzman (ext 119)  
**SENIOR EDITOR/PRODUCTION MANAGER**  
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**CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS**  
Tom Callan, Dennis W. Ho, Aaron Greenhood, Greg Margot

**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS**  
Tina Barry, Karen Butler, Nick Lalli, Matthew Lysik, Louise Crawford

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# GIVE 'EM THAT O' GAY RELIGION

## Religious institutions reach out to gays

By Joe Pompeo  
for The Brooklyn Paper

Carol Scott stood before her congregation one recent Sunday and announced she had rescinded her membership in the National Methodist Church due to its discriminatory stance on homosexuality. It was a life-altering moment for the 41-year-old Prospect Heights resident.

"It was an incredibly hard decision that took many months of prayer, meditation and grieving," she said that afternoon in the basement of Park Slope United Methodist Church.

"But it was a deepening, clarifying step in my faith journey. I'm not stepping away from my faith; I'm stepping more into it."

Dorothee Benz, 44, Scott's partner of three years added: "Many of us wrestle with this every day and it's an almost constant questioning. But if you're interested in a spiritual journey, there are places within the church that get it right."

Scott and Benz are among the many religious members of Brooklyn's gay and lesbian community. Bound either by tradition or the need for spiritual ties to religious institutions that deem their sexuality immoral, many struggle to divorce faith from church policy. But whether they remain active in their denominations or choose to worship only as part of a local congregation, gay people here seem increasingly comfortable practicing their faith in an organized way.

Take Laura Perry, a former Catholic who joined Park Slope Methodist in 2003.

Perry left the Catholic Church more than two decades ago due to what she called "conflict of prejudice and exclusion."

She remained a woman without a church for the next 18 years, but when she moved to Park Slope, she decided that joining a church would be a



Dorothee Benz (right) and Carol Scott at the Park Slope United Methodist Church on Sixth Avenue and Eighth Street, which welcomes lesbians and gays.

## Don't know much about theology

By Christie Rizk  
The Brooklyn Paper

Nearly 90 percent of Americans say they believe in God — now, quick, can you name the Four Gospels?

If you can't, you're not alone. Despite our nation's incredibly strong faith, most Americans don't know their Asa from their Ezekiel.

"The spiritual State of the Union is abysmal," said Stephen Prothero, chair of Boston University's religion department and author of a new book — "Religious Literacy" — that urges greater teaching of religion in school.

Whoa, but not to violate our nation's traditional barrier between Church and State. Prothero's religion is knowledge.

"Knowing religion is conducive to a good Democracy," said Prothero.

We see it played out every day on the killing fields of Iraq and Afghanistan. The inability of the people leading the "war on terror" to figure out the basics of Islam — Shiites? Sunnis? Kurds? Who knows? — only exacerbates the problem, he said.

"We're surprised that all of a sudden, the Sunnis and Shiites are fighting, but that's the kind of thing you would learn in high school," Prothero said.

To demonstrate how little Americans know about the basics of religion, Prothero gives students a religion quiz. The 15-question test covers everything from the 10 Commandments (can anyone really name them all?) to what the First Amendment says.

To test Brooklyn's religious literacy, a Brooklyn Paper reporter hit the streets with the 10 easiest questions from Prothero's quiz (see graphic). Most respondents considered themselves Believers — and most of them failed the quiz anyway.

Some were accidentally right. When one woman was asked to name a sacred Hindu text, she laughingly said, "The Kama Sutra," without realizing she was correct.

Her husband leaned over and said, "Isn't that a sex manual?" (It is. Now, that's a cool religion!)

On average, people got about six of the 10 Commandments and absolutely no one knew the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism.

The results may seem odd, considering the Bible's omnipresence in our society. That's why Prothero believes that education is necessary — not just for personal understanding, but also on a national and international level.

But some Brooklynites warned that a

school religion class could become an excuse to preach.

"I don't want some fundamentalist to teach my kids that evolution isn't true and make them pray in school," said one Park Slope mom, who didn't wish to be identified.

She conceded, however, "If teaching them religions — as long as it's not an excuse to make them religious — makes them aware of the world, then I think it's OK."

Her squeamishness is common, but the problem is avoidable with good training and a little open-mindedness, said Prothero.

"There's no constitutional barrier to teaching religion," he said, simplifying the problem to the teaching of religion — bad — vs. the teaching about religion — good.

"There are going to be unconstitutional teachings, but that already happens anyway with Intelligent Design classes," Prothero said.

"We go to court and get it straightened out. That's what they're for." Or we could all just watch "Pulp Fiction" and read "The Da Vinci Code."

## Faith in Brooklyn

good way to become active in the community.

At Park Slope Methodist, she felt like she "had come home," she said.

The church not only welcomes gays and lesbians, but also has a "reconciling committee" that works toward changing national church policy, and as a sign of solidarity will not perform any wedding ceremonies until all people can get married.

Now 58, Perry is troubled by the policies of her national church, which bars homosexuals from ministry and marriage. But

she takes pride in her local congregation — 30 percent of which, according to its pastor, is gay and lesbian.

In Sherman, 55, of Carroll Gardens, feels the same way about Kane Street Synagogue in Cobble Hill. For 16 years, he's attended services at this Conservative synagogue.

"My first recollection [of Kane Street Synagogue] was an impassioned speech by its then-president in response to anti-gay remarks Pat Robertson made," Sherman recalled. "I was surprised to find such an accepting congregation."

Conservative Judaism as a whole, Sherman noted, is re-thinking its positions on homosexuality.

Recent policy revisions allow for the acceptance of openly gay and lesbian students into professional rabbinic schools, and for the recognition of same-sex partners.

But different faiths vary. The Muslim world still considers homosexuality highly taboo. An international gay Muslim organization

called Al-Faitha has gained prominence, but New York lacks an organized gay Islamic presence.

And while some Christian denominations, like the Episcopalians, have made significant strides towards eliminating discrimination within their churches, only two — the Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church of Christ — have eliminated all barriers, including marriage, between gay and straight members.

Many Christians, both gay and straight, believe the Bible's message of unconditional acceptance supports the notion of equality for homosexuals.

"You can't get through a page of the New Testament without being confronted with the mandate of being truly welcoming and open to all people," said Benz.

But the governing bodies of most Christian faiths interpret other portions of the Bible as a condemnation of homosexuality.

That staunch opposition to homosexuality drove Bill Foote away from his local parish and towards a monthly mass organized by Dignity/Brooklyn, the local chapter of a national support network for gay Catholics.

The group hosts mass every third Saturday of the month in a Prospect Heights brownstone owned by St. Ann & the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. For a lifelong Catholic like Foote, it's a way to remain connected to a religion that does not fully accept his sexuality.

"It's helped me to better understand my faith," said the 55-year-old. "I like the idea that I feel very much a part of the church even though I'm not active in a parish. It's about following a belief that's ingrained in you."

Scott, the recently resigned Methodist, plans to remain an integral part of Park Slope Methodist. She said at this point in her life, she is focused on "living according to the Gospel" as opposed to being a Methodist.

"Faith is not the church, or what any one rulebook tells you," she said. "It's a living, breathing relationship just like any other."

## RELIGION 101: A primer

Americans are a deeply religious people who know nothing about religion. That's what author Stephen Prothero reveals in his new book, "Religious Literacy." Take Prothero's test below to discover your own literacy (answers on page 13).

- 1) Name the four Gospels.
- 2) Name a sacred Hindu text.
- 3) Name the holy book of Islam.
- 4) Name the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament.
- 5) Name the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism.
- 6) What is Ramadan and in what religion is it celebrated?
- 7) What is the Golden Rule?
- 8) Name the 10 Commandments.
- 9) What does the First Amendment say about religion?
- 10) Is the saying "God helps those who help themselves" in the Bible?

The Brooklyn Paper Illustrations / Sylvain Migdal

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NEW YORK AQUARIUM

# Single white believer seeks the same



**By Liz Cooper**  
for The Brooklyn Paper

Surfing through profiles on ChristianMingle.com, it seems the prerequisite is to already be in a committed relationship — with the Lord.

"I'm looking for a God-fearing woman, a woman who loves the Lord..." beckons a man from his bio photo. On another page, a woman in mid-giggle from her photo exclaims: "I am a Christian woman who is passionately in love with the Lord."

Could this be a match made in heaven?

For singles of all faiths, salvation (or at least love) can be found online with dating Web sites that narrow in on all religions and beliefs. Jill, 28 and Matthew, 27 of Marine Park, had briefly met through mutual friends, but it took crossing

paths on JDate, the go-to online dating site for Jewish singles, to result in many dates' ultimate goal — marriage. And Faye, a 24-year-old Muslim, met her husband on ArabLounge.com.

"Arranged marriage is no longer acceptable in most Arab families. Instead, a method of courting has taken over," she explains. "Young people who are of marrying age attend a number of social gatherings. This puts those of us who are busy with educational and work-related obligations in somewhat of a bind. For a lot of young Muslim professionals, the Internet is a great way to meet someone of a similar background."

But for many in the real dating world, and not the virtual playground, the singles' scene for faith-minded folks can be less than divine. Mohammed



— a Brooklyn Muslim who, like many others in his religion, doesn't believe in conventional dating, but wants to court a wife through friends and acquaintances — says at age 25 he's "way overzealous."

"I've waited this long out of fear. It's new territory — your whole life changes when you make that choice," he explains.

For religious singles who regularly put themselves out there, they don't have just the small talk to worry about, but also in some cases, that pink elephant in the room — their faith.

Lisa, 33, a New York transplant, who converted from Judaism to Christianity as a pre-teen, describes one date she had with someone who wasn't like-minded.

He brought up astrology, and when she asked him if he believed in it, his response was, "Well, I'd sooner believe in it than a guy standing on a rock telling me, 'God wants you to do these 10 things and you're damned if you don't, but don't worry, he loves you anyway.'"

That pretty much ended that date. Like so many others before it. "Basically New York City is a culture where 'Christian bashing' is encouraged and I have encountered it at many turns."

For Lisa, going out with fellow Christians has provided beneficial aspects to the usual

dating woes. "There is something comforting about dating a Christian and knowing they won't push [sex]... It's the same feeling as bowing your head in prayer before dinner and knowing the other person isn't looking around to see who is watching."

Cindy Gaddal, director of the Tri-State Oasis Singles Ministry, a Christian-based organization out of Bay Ridge, holds various annual events designed to take the pressure off finding someone. She founded the group because as a single woman she was tired of attending singles events where she would end up feeling "more lonely" afterward.

"So many singles watch their friends get married, and the Oasis events allow people to branch out and make deeper connections," explains Cindy. "We want them to connect with

Christ, live a life of service. Not get wrapped up in being single."

And for some of those untapped, like Tom, 37, who comes from a traditional Catholic family, the preference is to let fate take its course. He says he mostly meets women by accident, on the subway, parties, through friends, rather than seek through church or singles groups. He feels that sometimes the "religion angle almost becomes a counterpart."

And although he prefers to date women who have a similar value set as him, he admits that he's not as strict as he used to be about finding someone who is specifically Catholic: "I allowed religion to erase some possibilities in the past, and I regret that. What I've learned is that relationships on a personal level are about how you can relate, get along and respect the differences."

## Hooking up — online

Here are some of the most popular online religious dating sites (with their mottos).

- [www.ChristianMingle.com](http://www.ChristianMingle.com) ("Christian web site for Christian singles.")
- [www.CatholicMatch.com](http://www.CatholicMatch.com) ("Dedicated to Saint Raphael — patron saint of single people")
- [www.JDate.com](http://www.JDate.com) ("Explore the possibilities")
- [www.LatterDayLove.com](http://www.LatterDayLove.com) ("Helping Latter Day Saints find love.")
- [www.CharmatMatch.com](http://www.CharmatMatch.com) ("Where spiritual singles meet.")
- [www.ChristianCafe.com](http://www.ChristianCafe.com) ("All Christians. All single.") — Cooper
- [www.ArabLounge.com](http://www.ArabLounge.com) ("Connecting Arabs worldwide.")

## God to Ratner: Don't build so big

IF THERE ARE ANY ATHEIST opponents of Atlantic Yards, they might want to start believing in God — because God, apparently, is opposed to Bruce Ratner's mega-development.

Now, of course, I'm simplifying one of the great theistic questions of our time: Is God reserving a special, Old Testament-style wrath for his disloyal servant, Bruce Ratner?

Simplification or not, an increasing number of men of the cloth believe He is.

The debate over the godlessness of Ratner's 16-tower arena, office and residential development began earlier this year when a Long Island priest, the Rev. Fred Jenkins of St. Luke's Pentecostal Church, announced that he opposed Atlantic Yards on religious grounds.

God, he said, does not support the use of eminent domain — which is necessary if Ratner is to realize his vision.

The moral crusade against the mega-development was later joined by the Rev. Daniel Meeter of the Old



First Reformed Church in Park Slope.

On his blog (yes, even pastors have blogs nowadays), Meeter calls for his disloyal servant, Bruce Ratner.

"The Bible is not against development," Meeter wrote. "But the scale of a project can affect its relative morality. The scale of this project is monstrous. It's a moral issue."

Another "moral issue"? His belief that government agencies were "prejudiced" in favor of Ratner.

"In this case, [government] is playing for one of the teams," Meeter wrote. "That itself is a moral issue."

And, like so many things Biblical, therein lies a great story.

In the Old Testament book of Kings, there is a tale of Naboth and his vineyard. Now, this wasn't an

Ernest and Julio Gallo-sized factory farm, but a small vineyard that just happened to be sitting on land that King Ahab wanted. But alas, the Torah forbade the king from seizing the land.

But Ahab's wife, Queen Jezebel (who was a gentile, but that's a whole other story) tricked the town fathers into believing that Naboth had spoken against God and the king. For that, Naboth was sentenced to death, paving the way for Ahab to take the land.

Given the facts about Atlantic Yards, it's a pretty compelling story. Naboth (Brooklyn) had a vineyard (private homes) that he didn't want to give up, so the town fathers (the Empire State Development Corporation) took it away from him and gave it to Ahab (Ratner).

But is it illustrative? After all, Ahab (Ratner) got his land and lived happily ever after? Wrong. The Biblical story tells how God was so angry about what had happened to Naboth (Brooklyn) that Ahab (Ratner) was later killed in a freak accident (freak accident?).

Meeter said he wasn't surprised.

"In the Torah, small owners of private property are seen as where prosperity lies. In that way, Atlantic Yards breaks the rules of the Torah."

Meeter also cited the stories of the Tower of Babel (God was against it) and Adam and Eve as Biblical examples of leaders not knowing when to say, "Enough."

"I don't know what [Atlantic Yards architect] Frank Gehry wants," Meeter wrote. "I don't know what Bruce Ratner wants or what [Borough President] Marty Markowitz wants. I don't think they want to be like gods. But apparently they don't know when to say, 'No, Enough.'"

On the other hand, plenty of Brooklynites are saying they want more of Meeter. The pastor said his Atlantic Yards blog post has gotten him more traffic than any prior entry.

"If you google my name, the Atlantic Yards thing comes up," Meeter told me.

First a blog, and now he's googling his own name. But it all goes to show you that with Atlantic Yards, there is no separation of church and state.

## The great thereafter?

What is heaven? What is hell? We hit the streets to find out. — Ariella Cohen

Respondent	Heaven / Hell
Chris Havens, Boerum Hill, real estate broker	That reminds me of a joke: A real-estate broker shows up in heaven and it's a closing. He says, "Wait, I wonder what hell is." It turns out, hell is a closing, too. He asks about it, and Satan says, "In heaven, the sale actually closes."
Ron Schweiger, Flatlands, Brooklyn Borough Historian	Heaven is a vacation in a beautiful paradise, or a cooperative classroom. Hell is when a teacher has a class that won't be quiet.
Susan Liddell, DUMBO, bike mechanic	Heaven is someplace where people are able to get along with no drama. Hell is a day filled with working on French bicycles.
Ken Siegelman, Bensonhurst, poet laureate of Brooklyn	Heaven is what you make of it in this life and the coming life. Hell is living with illness.
Greg O'Connell, Cobble Hill, developer	Heaven is family and health. Hell? Luckily, I haven't found that yet.
Page Neal, Prospect Heights, jewelry designer	Heaven is being positive and focused with lots of snacks and beaches in the mix. Hell is having an office job where I am surrounded by non-funny people who think that talking in strange accents is amusing.
Simcha Weinstein, Brooklyn Heights, rabbi, Pratt Institute	Heaven is the culmination of all the good deeds a person has done. You're building your own paradise. It's the difference between 'being' and 'becoming.' This world is the 'becoming.' Hell is all the good deeds you could have done, but didn't do when you had the chance.

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## Rocks of ages

We're not called the Borough of Churches for nothing. The oldest church in Brooklyn — the Flatbush Dutch Reformed Church — was ordered built by Peter Stuyvesant himself in 1662 (though it wasn't completed until 1793). Here is how other Brooklyn congregations stack up (unlike Dutch Reformed, most are not housed in their original buildings). — **Christie Rizk**

Congregation (neighborhood)	Age
Dawood Mosque (Boerum Hill)	83 years
Congregation Mount Sinai (Brooklyn Heights)	125 years
Sacred Hearts of Jesus, Mary & St. Stephen (Carroll Gardens)	125 years
Sixth Avenue Baptist Church (Park Slope)	140 years
Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church (Fort Greene)	150 years
Kane Street Synagogue (Cobble Hill)	150 years
St. Patrick's (Bay Ridge)	157 years
Holy Cross Church (Flatbush)	159 years
Plymouth Church (Brooklyn Heights)	160 years
St. John's Episcopal Church (Bay Ridge)	173 years
New Utrecht Reformed Church (Bensonhurst)	179 years



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**Maundy Thursday Communion and Tenebrae Service**

Friday, April 6

**Good Friday**

12:00 – 3:00 P.M. *Sanctuary open*

Sunday, April 8 • 11:00 a.m.

**Easter Worship Service**

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# 'Nothing' but beliefs

By Nica Lalli

The Brooklyn Paper

When you identify your religious affiliation as "Nothing," it can be challenging to figure out what you do believe in.

It can be easier to say what you *don't* believe in — as in "I don't believe in God," "I don't believe that there is a divine entity in the sky that tangles with us down here on Earth," and "I don't believe that things happen because there is a force or a personality willing them to be."

But being "nothing" doesn't mean believing in nothing. So what do I believe in?

I believe that we, as humans, control our own minds and actions. When a church-going person says, "Thank God," I

**Nothing in Brooklyn**

say, "Thank me."

At my house, grace is not for thanking a god for providing food, but rather for thanking those who worked to literally put the food on the table. That is usually me, so I get the credit for doing the cooking.

I have been told that this is arrogant, that God is the one who provides, and we should be his grateful servants. I say that thinking that God cares about you is arrogant — I mean doesn't he have better things to do with his time than listen to us whining about dinner?

The human condition — the quest for happiness, the desire to better oneself, and the ability to learn, change and heal — is what really confirms my belief in people. When lives are changed, some would say that God is testing or challenging us. But I say that the challenge comes from within.

I have seen this happen, like when my friend was widowed and he didn't think he could make it through life alone. But he did, and he is now remarried, and I am thrilled to say, he is happy. He didn't forget his pain, though. But he learned to live with it.

I also believe in strong community, which is all about people. And so I try to make a difference stay involved and watch out for my neighbors. I work to make Park Slope a better place, and if you forget to move your car on street-cleaning day, God won't save you from a ticket, but I will. I saw the first sign of spring

## 'Nothing' is delivered

I was driving in Manhattan one day. I signaled to make a right turn onto Broadway. There were many people all around the car, including pedestrians, other drivers, and a bus at the intersection full of riders. There were huge advertisements on the side of the bus, blown-up pictures of celebrities — people — staring down at me. I had to wait to make the turn, since the crosswalk was still crowded.

I looked all around me and felt the strong presence of the people. My car windows were rolled up. I didn't hear, touch, or smell anyone; it was a different kind of sense at work. The strong presence was that each person — right there on the street at that very moment in time — was thinking of something, was remembering, feeling, forming an idea. It was as if

I could feel all those brains at work. I could feel the energy that made all those people individuals. Each person in the world has his own story, thoughts, and internal life. It seemed overwhelming, and I had to remind myself to breathe. I took in a deep breath, and the crosswalk cleared. I put my foot to the gas pedal and took the turn down Broadway. The moment passed, I turned on the radio, and drove home.

— *From "Nothing: Something to Believe In," by Nica Lalli (Prometheus Books, 2007).*

yesterday, green shoots pushing up through the dirt in the tree pit outside my house, and I was reminded that the symbols of spring — of rebirth and regeneration — are just as important to me as they are to those with religion.

The greenery reminded me of my core belief: there is always hope and spring will always come.

Nica Lalli is a columnist for The Park Slope Edition of The Brooklyn Paper.

gregation was entirely Haitian and the Sunday service is held in Haitian Creole.

A woman wailed into the microphone (with a pitch that the Lord could love), as old ladies shook their hindquarters and men rattled tambourines.

Everyone seemed at home — which makes sense in a neighborhood built on faith.

## FAITHIEST...

Continued from page 1

Belal Masjid, a walk-up apartment turned Islamic center.

"You go down Coney Island Avenue and you see Arabic signs and Orthodox Jews right in the same neighborhood. And for the most part, we all get along," said Ron Schweiger, Brooklyn's official historian and president of Beth Elneh v' Olr Progressive Shalom Zedek, a Reformed synagogue in Kensington.

Israeli, French, Russian and Peruvian Jews meet at the Orthodox Congregation Agudath Shalom on 18th Avenue, said Elaine Engel, a volunteer. "We have a very diverse population," she said. "Jews, you know, are all over the world."

Kensington is also home to Irish, Polish, Asian, African, Russian, Mexican, Muslim, Albanian and Caribbean people. And they all need a house (or apartment) of worship.

Immigrants don't just bring belongings, they bring their culture and faith, said Sal Taormina, a retired social worker who lives on Church Avenue in Prospect Park South.

"Flairish in general was a beacon for immigrants," Taormina said. "You get a rabbi and he gets a little following, and boom, you've got another church."

Russian signs in Hebrew, Arabic, Russian and English seem to hide the nondescript mosque, dotting Ditmas Park and Kensington. It's easy to walk by and see the larger Islamic houses of prayer, such as the Al-Mahdi Foundation on Coney Island Avenue, without noticing.

Sabbath isn't for everyone.

In 1893, Roman Catholic immigrants formed the Immaculate Heart of Mary congregation, eventually building a towering, 1,000-seat cathedral on Fort

Hamilton Parkway at East Fifth Street in 1931.

"In the midst of the Great Depression, when people had nothing, they found the means to build this beautiful, magnificent structure," said Father Robert B. Adamo, leader of a mostly western-European and Filipino flock.

When we asked directions to the New York Cambodian American Society's Buddhist temple, a friendly Christian woman near Park Circle said she didn't know, but added, "There's a great church right there," and pointed to the colonial International Baptist Church on Coney Island Avenue.

The woman hurried off saying, "I love you, I love you. There is only one salvation, and that's the living God and his holy name."

Not everyone is happy about this religious fervor.

"It's too much," said Suzanne Knabe who moved to Kensington seven years ago. The area's new mega-churches don't pay enough taxes and are generally huge cement eyesores, said the agnostic Knabe.

"I thought it was a shopping mall," she said of the enormous Calvary Cathedral of Praise at 45 East Eighth St.

Inside the Calvary church, 300 or so West Indians sang and shouted for Jesus. The church's West Indian population makes Caribbean-Americans feel at home — but John James, the lone white Christian in the congregation last Sunday, said he felt just as "at home."

James moved to Kensington from Bay Ridge four months ago and said he adores the neighborhood's "strong spirituality."

Just as fun is the tiny bele-in-the-wall Berea Church of God at 1620 Newkirk Ave. The con-

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7:30pm. El Via Crucis en Español

**HOLY SATURDAY, April 7th**  
8:00pm. Solemn Easter Vigil Mass

**EASTER SUNDAY, April 8th**  
9:30am. English Mass and Children's Liturgy  
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### The Easter Triduum

**Holy Thursday.** Mass of the Lord's Supper, 8:00 pm  
*Adoration concludes with sung Tenebrae at 11:30 pm*

**Good Friday.** The Way of the Cross, 11:00 am, outdoors  
Liturgy of the Lord's Passion, 3:00 pm, *Veneration of the Cross*

**Holy Saturday.** The Great Vigil of Easter, 8:00 pm  
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# This faith is a stretch

## Falun Gong followers feel the burn as they pray

By Neil Munshi  
for The Brooklyn Paper

Seeing them in Prospect Park, their figures posed in unison, a passerby might assume they were just an early morning exercise group. But all that stretching is actually a faith.

Falun Gong consists of a series of five exercises and a dedication to three principles: Truthfulness, Benevolence and Forbearance.

Li Hongzhi founded the faith in 1992 in China, where the state banned it in 1999 out of fear that widespread practice would undermine the government. The event that sparked the ban was a 10,000-strong session at the heart of Beijing calling attention to recent violence against Falun Gong practitioners. Since being banned, there have been many reports of torture and violence against members of the faith.

Though there are said to be 100 million Falun Gong

followers across the world, no one knows how many are here in New York. But finding a local group is easy, as members are very open to teaching others about the religion, and practice sites can be easily tracked down via falundafa.org (there are four in Brooklyn).

The exercises — Buddha Showing a Thousand Hands, the Falun Standing Stance, Penetrating the Two Cosmic Extremes, the Great Heavenly Circuit and Strengthening Divine Powers — are the most recognizable emblems of the faith. With the text, they create a path toward changing one's xinxing, or moral standard — moving people to use the three principles in all aspects of their lives, Clearing the Heart.

Hunter and Betty Hunter-Beatty, sisters from Crown Heights, have been practicing in their basement since March 2000, after

finding a group doing the tai-chi-like exercises in Prospect Park. Hunter spoke of the nonchalant nature of the faith. There is no central building and members are responsible for their own self-improvement, cultivated through the exercises.

"The exercises open up all the energy channels in the body," Hunter said. Practitioners describe a lightness of being, an ethereal quality produced by performing the exercises.

Quan Sha, who joined the Falun Gong faith after moving to New York from China in 1997, certainly has this laid-back attitude. Back home, she said, she didn't have time to search for answers. "But in my heart, I always looked for something special, something spiritual," she said while seated on a carpet square in Hunter-Beatty's basement.

Sha, Colin Fredericson and Lillian Simmons sat in the basement with the two sisters, as they do most Tuesdays and Thursdays, to recite from "Zhuan Falun," one of the faith's sacred texts. Reading — sometimes in unison in a droning monotone, sometimes switching off — the group recited maxims they are loath to have quoted, in case they are taken out of context.

Most perform the exercises every day, but only make it to the top of Prospect Park's Long Meadow on weekends. When a group comes together, they feel the "energy field is much stronger," Sha said. Simmons, a special-education teacher from East Flatbush, was introduced to the faith by Hunter, and said she was first drawn in by the exercises.

"Adhering them for a certain length of time — and it doesn't have to be long — your body is energized to the point where you can be stressed, then you do the standing exercise and feel your body open up," she explained.

Colin Fredericson, a student living in Park Slope, was raised in a lonely Jewish home, and

found Falun Gong in 2003 while studying in Florida.

"My family is not very strict religiously," said Fredericson, framed by the wood paneling and lavender drywall behind him. "They supported me because they saw that [practicing the faith] helped me" relieve stress and feel content.

Like the sisters, most of the practitioners who gather in Hunter-Beatty's basement have families that aren't members. While they stress that the religion is for everyone, including families, they insist the faith revolves around the individual.

"It is an individual practice," Simmons said. "We are upgrading ourselves; others can't help us improve."

With self-improvement in mind, the faithful gathered in Hunter-Beatty's basement bounce comfortably between levity and gravity, content in their self-cultivation but wary of the image they might evoke.

They are at once closed off about certain details of their lives — and the faith — and completely open about others.

They scoff incredulously at questions asked from an ignorant point of view while at the



Falun Gong followers do their tai-chi-like stretches every Saturday in Prospect Park.

same time relishing the opportunity to explain their faith.

While observation might reveal a certain set of shared characteristics, Hunter-Beatty said it can be dangerous to think of the faith as collective.

"My understanding is very different than everyone else's understanding," she said. "If all of us thought alike, we would be something that the Communist Party has said that we are: a cult — which we are not."

While Falun Gong brings its members clarity and happiness, they are constantly reminded of

the atrocities committed against their brethren in China.

A 2006 report concluded "there has been and continues to be a large scale organ seizures from unwilling Falun Gong practitioners." Of all the atrocities committed against members of her faith, Hunter-Beatty finds the persecution of women particularly appalling. She spoke of mothers separated from children, gang rape and death.

"If it were any other group of women, it would be all over the newspaper," she said. "But because it's not in the news, people have the tendency to believe that it's not true."

Falun Gong members raise awareness by holding press conferences and demonstrations, contacting politicians to bring these atrocities to light, and sometimes even sitting in cages in front of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation headquarters in Manhattan.

But that's a world away from a sleepy block in Crown Heights, where five practitioners examine their faith, cleanse their spirits and think of their brethren far away.

### FAITH SKETCHBOOK

BY SAM FERDI



## They gotta have faith

We asked all our local pols whether there was too much or too little religious faith in our government today. Here's what we heard.



"When I see young Brooklynites devoted to their faith, I see the beginnings of a lifelong respect for life, which benefits us all. And the universal principle of every faith is a moral responsibility that guides decisions between right and wrong, which politicians should always adhere to, in both their public and private lives."

— Borough President Markowitz



"In the Bible, God states, 'I have given everyone a measure of faith.' Faith is a deeply personal and private matter, and I believe that all of my colleagues recognize the powerful role that faith plays in our lives, and in the lives of our constituents. I think back to the days and months following 9-11, and the assassination of Councilman James Davis. It was faith that brought us through. From tragedy to triumph, faith is our core, the foundation of our belief system, like a solid rock upon which we stand."

— Councilwoman Letitia James (D-Fort Greene)

"There can never be too much religious faith in public life. Programmatically, we must certainly maintain the constitutionally required separation between church and state. However, devotion to the highest ideals of religious faith requires compassion and selfless behavior. These characteristics should be encouraged in those who serve in public life."

— Assemblyman Hakeem Jeffries (D-Fort Greene)



"We believe and act on our values that call for helping those being left behind. We believe in equality and fairness. These values are democratic values and we should embrace them without hesitation."

— Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-Sheepshead Bay)



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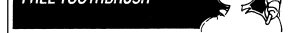
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The Brooklyn Paper's essential guide to the Borough of Kings

March 31, 2007

# Myrtle, Inc.



## The reinvention of Clinton Hill's Myrtle Avenue

By Nick Kindelsperger  
for The Brooklyn Paper

For years, the stretch of Myrtle Avenue from Washington Park to Grand Avenue was famous for all the wrong reasons. Sandwiched between housing projects, it was a street of modest storefronts and not many dining options that seemed worlds away from the housing boom going on a half mile south in the center of Clinton Hill.

"It was Murder Avenue," summarized Rob Perris, district manager of the local community board.

Whatever Lola wants: Myrtle Avenue's Chez Lola (above) serves brunch, dinner and cocktails to the hip and hungry of Fort Greene.

But as Fort Greene and Clinton Hill have become more fashionable (and decidedly more expensive), this once-desolate stretch now has a burgeoning scene of bars, restaurants and stores that is surprising some long time residents.

"What hasn't changed?" asked Perris. "You wouldn't even recognize the old Myrtle Avenue now."

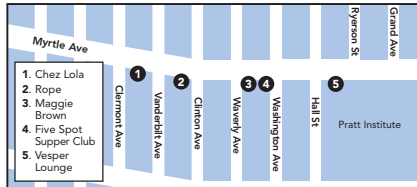
With this in mind, GO Brooklyn set out on the Avenue to find out just what this renaissance has wrought.

### Chez Lola

One new restaurant on the strip is Chez Lola, a "cousin" to Chez Oskar, a French cafe located on the more genteel DeKalb Avenue just two long blocks south. The gorgeous, high-ceilinged room provides an ideal sunlight drenched spot for Sunday brunch. And with a long list of cocktails, it also doubles as a lounge. As the lights dim for evening service, the room becomes more intimate.

It still sticks out on the stretch of Myrtle, but owner Charlotta Janssen knew what she was getting into. "When we opened Chez Oskar, DeKalb Avenue was just as iffy before," she said.

Janssen said she wanted to get in early and establish a neighborhood identity, despite some early detractors. "Some people are resentful of the new restaurants, but generally people are happy to have a place to go," said Janssen, pointing out that she recycled much of the room, from the tin ceiling to a wine rack made from an old mattress. "You want to tap into what's there and refine."



## THE CRAWL

Chez Lola (387 Myrtle Ave. at Vanderbilt Avenue in Fort Greene) is open daily for dinner from 5:30-11 pm and on weekends from 11 am-5:30 pm for brunch. For information, call (718) 856-1484.

Maggie Brown (455 Myrtle Ave. at Washington Avenue in Fort Greene) is open Sunday through Thursday from 10 am-11 pm and on Friday and Saturday from 10 pm-midnight. For information, call (718) 645-7001.

Rope (415 Myrtle Ave. at Clinton Avenue in Fort Greene) is open Monday through Saturday from 5:30 pm-4 am and on Sunday from 5:30 pm-2 am. For information, call (718) 522-2899.

Five Spot Supper Club (459 Myrtle Ave. at Washington Avenue in Fort Greene) is open at noon daily. The take-out counter is open until midnight. The dining room is open until midnight during the week and until 1 am on Friday and Saturday. For information, call (718) 852-6002.

Vesper Lounge (493 Myrtle Ave. at Ryerson Street in Fort Greene) is open Monday through Thursday from 11:30 am-10:30 pm, Saturday from 11:30 am-11 pm and Sunday from 4 pm-10:30 pm. For information, call (718) 399-1964.

### Maggie Brown

A refined feeling also pervades Maggie Brown, another restaurant on the strip. Pictures of Hollywood starlets, framed vintage portraits and soft-core porn are all presided over by a large antlered beast on one wall — a motif sure to confuse all those who enter.

See MYRTLE on page 9

## EVENT

### Bridge cross

Walking from Brooklyn to Manhattan is always an experience. On April 6, however, a procession over the bridge will be a religious one.

The Catholic lay group Communion and Liberation will, for the 12th year, bring the "Good Friday Way of the Cross Procession" from St. James Cathedral to St. Peter's in Lower Manhattan.

The march is led by Brooklyn's Bishop Ignatius Catuocchio and Bay Ridge resident Jonathan Fields, who will carry a four-foot, 10-pound wooden cross across the bridge. Along the way, it will include songs from the Communion and Liberation choir as well as readings from the Gospels.

Beyond the joggies and cars zooming by, the parade draws thousands of spectators and has even been recognized by the Pope himself — though he'll be bearing his own cross on Good Friday and won't be on hand.

"Good Friday Way of the Cross Procession" begins at 10 am on April 6. Meet at St. James Cathedral (248 Jay St. at Tillary Street in Downtown Brooklyn). For information, call (212) 337-3580. — Giacomo Maniacco

## MUSIC

### Rock Mecca

Though you couldn't tell today, the Brooklyn Paramount Theater — currently home to Long Island University's intramural sports teams — was once one of the most lavish performance spaces in the city.

So, on April 1, LIU will commemorate the Paramount's history with the "Rock 'n' Roll Reunion" concert, featuring greats like Bobbie Lewis and Little Anthony and The Imperials. The show will be hosted by Bruce Manow, the Brooklyn-born DJ who will always be everyone's Cousin Bruce.

Built in 1928, the 4,188-seat theater had water fountains filled with goldfish and countless Renaissance-style paintings and statuary.

"It was a palace of art, but unfortunately almost all of it has disappeared," said Michael Hittman, a professor of anthropology at LIU.

Before the theater was bought by LIU in 1962, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Ella Fitzgerald, Chuck Berry and Fats Domino all played there.

With "Rock 'n' Roll Reunion," it looks like the Paramount's original home time is back where they belong.

"Rock 'n' Roll Reunion" will take place at 2:30 and 7:30 pm on April 1 at the Brooklyn Paramount Theater (corner of Flatbush and DeKalb avenues in Downtown Brooklyn). Tickets are \$40-\$100. For information, call (516) 299-3580 or visit [www.liu.edu](http://www.liu.edu). — John O'Connor

## ART

### Faith brush

Red Hook artist Michael Haffika describes his large-scale oil paintings as works of realism. Influenced by his Jewish heritage — his parents were both Holocaust survivors — and his Brooklyn surroundings, Haffika creates stark images, though, that manage to retain a discernible tenderness.

"I don't control what I represent," Haffika said to GO Brooklyn. "I experience something that I can't explain, which gives me a certain measure of faith."

He has just released "Conscious / Unconscious," a collection of short stories and drawings based on his life which he began in 1973. His next work will be a study of the morphology of the Hebrew alphabet.

"Conscious / Unconscious" is available at BookCourt (163 Court St. at Dean Street in Cobble Hill) for \$18. For information, call (718) 875-3677. — Grace Labatt

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## Decanters and Decanting

By Darrin Siegfried

When I teach aspiring Wine Captains about decanting wine, I tell them that there are three "Official" reasons for decanting, and one "Insider's" reason: Big bottles, such as double magnums, are awkward to pour from. It is easier, and you will spill less, if you pour from the bottle into a decanter, then fill the glasses from the decanter. I have always loved big bottles. They're so much fun to open at a party, and they make an impressive gift. Opening a larger bottle seems to make it more of a special occasion, but pouring from such a heavy bottle can often lead to accidents. Show off the bottle, open it, and fill up your decanter.

Young wines, especially reds, will improve from the aeration the wine receives from decanting. The flavors and aromas will open up. The wine will taste softer and will drink better. Simply opening a bottle and letting it stand there, with a surface area smaller than a penny exposed to the air does nothing to help the wine "breathe." Try it for yourself: the next time you open a bottle, pour a sip into your glass and taste it. Then decant the rest, let it stand for a few minutes and pour another taste. You'll be surprised at the difference a bit of breathing can make.

Older red wines usually accumulate sediment with aging. In decanting, you pour the wine into another vessel, leaving the sediment behind. The combination of tannins and pigments in some reds form long molecules called polymers that, in time, will sink to the bottom of the bottle. Vintage Porto "throws" lots of sediment. Bordeaux reds throw a good amount, but lighter reds such as Burgundy rarely do. You can tell if there is sediment in the bottle by

holding it up to a bright light. To decant your wine, let the bottle stand upright, undisturbed, for at least a day. Without shaking the bottle (which would stir up the sediment) remove the cork. Slowly pour the wine into a decanter while, using a short candle as a light source, look down through the neck of the bottle. When the sediment moves up the bottle, you'll be able to see it clearly. Pour carefully, letting the sediment catch in the shoulder of the bottle, and you'll lose only a spoonful of sediment and have clear wine to enjoy. Vintage Porto comes in bottles so dark that it is almost impossible to see through the glass. To decant one of these treasures, you can place a funnel into the mouth of the decanter and line it with a few layers of rinsed cheesecloth, squeezed dry. Slowly pour the Porto into the funnel and let the cheesecloth filter out the sediment.

The "Insider's" reason for decanting: just for the sheer pleasure of it. A good friend of mine won't allow a bottle on her table, insisting on using one of her English Claret jugs to serve wine. A decanter does not have to be fancy, expensive or ornate: a pitcher or a jug will do. I have a few crystal decanters, and the ones I always seem to use are well-designed yet quite plain, but I like a more modern look than many do. I just prefer serving myself and my friends from a decanter. The wine really does taste better, and it seems so elegant to pour even a simple, everyday wine from a beautiful decanter. Like a glass of wine, it's part of the good life.

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## B'steeya my heart

Mazzat means "many appetizers" in Arabic, and tasty bites to be shared with a group are the focus of the menu at this Columbia Waterfront District cafe.

"The food's not just Middle Eastern here," said Gamal "Jimmy" Bakhoum (pictured), owner of the four-month-old restaurant. "What we serve is really Mediterranean."

Bakhoum, who owns two other restaurants in Manhattan's East Village, offers an array of small plates and larger shareable dishes at his 65-seat eatery.

"It's very beautiful here. Very rustic, antique style with a brick wall and the others painted ochre and soft green. The bar is beautiful too," he said with no small amount of pride. "It's 23 feet long, all mahogany wood." (The restaurant has a full liquor license.)

Bakhoum offers the usual array of spreads like hummus and baba ghanouj, as well as falafel and fava beans, stuffed zucchini and two customer favorites: garlic shrimp and dates wrapped with bacon. Entree-sized dishes, like the "Alexandria style" grilled whole fish (usually branzini), come with a side of rice mixed with egg noodles.

The restaurant has no outdoor seating, a fact that doesn't trouble Bakhoum, citing the joint's 18-foot doors. When they're open and the sun shines in, "it's just like being outdoors," he said.

Mazzat (208 Columbia St. between Sackett and Union streets in the Columbia Waterfront District) accepts American Express, MasterCard and Visa. Entrees: \$12-\$16. The restaurant serves lunch and dinner daily. Brunch is available on weekends from noon-5 pm. Subway: F, G to Carroll Street. For information, call (718) 852-1652.

— Tina Barry



Photo: Brooklyn Paper / Jeff H. Kessler

## Lamb I am

Roasted lamb has long been a staple on the Easter dinner table. Sticking with tradition, however, doesn't always mean the same roasted shank with a gooey pile of mint jelly.

GO Brooklyn asked Charlie Statelman, chef and owner of Wombat in Williamsburg, to share his recipe for lamb burgers — a new twist on an old favorite. Statelman went above and beyond, though, inventing a mint and cucumber salad just for us. So, while your Easter may usually be pastel, this recipe will add a real dash of color to your holiday table.

### Wombat's Lamb Burger and Mint Cucumber Salad

Yield: Four burgers

12 oz. of lamb shoulder, ground  
24 oz. of ground beef  
Salt, pepper, thyme, rosemary and oregano

### Charlie's Mint Cucumber Salad

1/2 cucumber  
1/2 cup water  
1/2 cup distilled white vinegar  
2 tablespoons of sugar  
1 pinch salt  
1 bunch of mint, chopped (stems off!)

For the burgers, mix the meats and seasonings and toss on the grill. Frying will add too much grease to the already fatty lamb.

For the salad, skin and seed your cucumber. Slice into 1/4-inch pieces. Mix the water, vinegar, sugar and salt. Toss in the mint and cucumber. Serve immediately — either on top of or next to the burger.

## MATZO...

Continued from page 1

The relationship between food and family runs deep. "For so many people, food is a connection to Judaism," said Chaya Kirschenbaum who last week led a Passover cooking class, part of a quarterly series of Women's Inner Circle programming at 214 Underhill Ave. in Prospect Heights.

Taught by Levana Kirschenbaum — who is, of course, family — of the acclaimed Kosher Manhattan eatery, Levana's, the class attracted a gaggle of women looking to take the edge off their hurried business routine. Chef Kirschenbaum's advice for preparing a meal that doesn't taste forced? "Try to make dishes that never had 'chametz' (breadstuffs that are forbidden during Passover) to begin with," she said.

Her demonstration ranged

from a simple artichoke soup and a salmon dish caked with a thick ambrosia of fresh herbs, to subtle elevations of holiday classics like her Sweet-and-Sour Brisket.

From macaroons to meringues, Passover desserts have plagued holiday hosts for generations. Chef Kirschenbaum's flourless chocolate torte, which is made with ground nuts and high-end Callebaut chocolate (it's kosher!), was dense and decadent — the perfect answer to the perennial Passover predicament.

Would-be chefs had different reasons for taking the course. Cradling her 3-week-old son, Danielle Glanvill spoke of the importance of communicating religious identity through food.

"I gravitated towards Judaism later in life," she said. "Identity is that important." Glanvill and her husband own L'Epicurie, a fine foods store at 270 Vanderbilt Ave. in Prospect Heights that sells prepared food including, yes, homemade brisket.

As the night wore on and Chef Kirschenbaum's creations were pulled from the oven, the conversation turned to the central issue of the Seder: the matzo balls.

It is a question of faith: Should the orbs sink to the bottom of the soup or should they be "clouds," buoyant masses that deconstruct in the broth? All agreed that seltzer made the balls fluffier, but



Pesadich pleasures: Levana Kirschenbaum's flourless chocolate torte, above, along with her herb-spiked salmon, at left, are both tasty ways to keep Kosher for Passover.

decadent Riojas and plummy Bordeaux; square cakes of matzo were replaced with artisanal, handmade varieties, bubbling as if cooked in a tandoor.

And as my brothers and I grew and made the bitter-sweet migration from the "kids table" to the dining room, our tastes began to transcend the matzo pizzas of yore and came to appreciate the flavors of the holiday and the unrivaled brilliance of our mother, whose fineness made those early spring nights truly different from all others.

For information on Women's Inner Circle programming, contact Rabbi Ari and Chaya Kirschenbaum at jccbrooklyn@gmail.com.

few had made the connection that the more you handle your matzo balls, the heavier they will be.

It depends on one's tradition — though even tradition changes. In recent years, my

family's pot has simmered with less matzo balls as carbohydrates were gradually aligned with narcotics and our waistlines shrank in tandem. Bottles of Manischewitz were replaced with comparatively

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	<b>Scottadito</b> (788A Union St. at Sixth Avenue in Park Slope, (718) 636-4800)	An antipasto choice, a pasta choice and a meat course (try the braised short ribs). No dessert.	Absolutely. By dispensing with dessert, Scottadito provides a full Italian meal.	They don't. There was even a half-bottle wine special.
Christie Rizk	<b>Cocotte</b> (337 Fifth Ave. at Fourth Street in Park Slope, (718) 832-6848)	A salad with foie gras, steak au poivre and a flourless chocolate cake.	Definitely. Where — or when — else are you going to get foie gras and steak for \$21?	With the drinks, of course. After three drinks (a soda, a glass of wine and a bottle of beer), the restaurant made the price of another dinner.
Ariella Cohen	<b>Apartment 138</b> (138 Smith St. at Bergen Street in Cobble Hill, (718) 858-0556)	Butternut squash risotto, a slab of grilled chicken served with buttery smashed potatoes and a cute mini apple and cranberry cobbler with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.	After enjoying the food — and the leftover — we are confident in saying that Apartment 138 was not trying to skimp.	With the \$4 Pabst. But it looked great against the white tablecloth, so it was worth it.
Dana Rubinstein	<b>Olea Mediterranean Taverna</b> (171 Lafayette Ave. at Adelphi Street in Fort Greene, (718) 643-7003)	Lentil salad with falafel croutons, orecchiette pasta and a dessert choice of dried fig and mascarpone tart or chocolate torte.	Sure, but just barely.	They didn't. The beer was fairly priced.
Rob M. Errera	<b>La Maison Du Couscous</b> (484 77th St. at Fifth Avenue in Bay Ridge, (718) 921-2400)	A starter, an entree and a couscous dessert of choice.	Definitely. Though modestly sized, the tagines were delectable, especially the lamb with artichoke hearts and green peas.	The host urged against the "Dine in Brooklyn" deal, pointing out the original prices would come out cheaper per person.
Adam Rathe	<b>The River Cafe</b> (1 Water St. at Old Fulton Street in DUMBO, (718) 522-5200)	Truffled chicken salad, sea scallops and the dessert trio.	More exciting than a week's worth of deli sandwiches — and more expensive, too.	The \$5 iced tea is a bit much, but it's an integral part of the experience.
	<b>Rice</b> (81 Washington St. at Front Street in DUMBO, (718) 222-9880)	A shared dim sum appetizer, curried chicken and gelato.	Absolutely. At two-for-\$21.12, this was a great deal.	On the return business — because you'll definitely come back.

## MYRTLE...

Continued from page 7

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Brunch is similarly hearty and manageable, featuring dishes ranging from corned beef hash to a prosciutto and sheep's milk omelet. The bar is also well stocked with whiskey, and the happy hour starts early — running from 4:30-7:30 pm — making it a perfect stop before the night really starts to get going.

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"The vibe is low key. Everyone is friendly." During the week the bar can feel more like a friend's living room, with people stopping by for a drink, chucking their bags haphazardly to the side and lounging on the couches littered around the room.

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Head a few doors down to Five Spot Soul Food and you'll find a huge complex including a restaurant, take-out window and a bar with nightly acts ranging from comedy to jazz. The food here comes in gigantic portions and is relatively affordable, which makes the takeout window almost as busy as the bar.

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# These evil space villains took her for a ride

By Gersh Kuntzman  
The Brooklyn Paper

A woman was forced at gunpoint by two thugs to drive to her bank and withdraw \$1,500 on March 20.

It all started at around 2:10 pm when the woman was preparing to pull out of a spot on Sixth Street, between Seventh and Eighth avenues, just as she was preparing to leave, three muggers drove up in a green car and asked, "Are you getting out?"

Before she could answer, two of the men hopped into the woman's car and showed off a black pistol. "Give me the money," one of the men shouted.

The woman turned over \$300, but the gunmen wanted more, forcing the woman to drive to a bank three blocks away.

The woman was threatened repeatedly to coerce her into cooperating.

"Bring her to Fifth Avenue, and I will kill her," one of the men said, emphasizing what would happen if the woman didn't turn over the money.

Once at the bank, which is on Ninth Street, the woman and one of the men went to the teller, where she withdrew the \$1,500.

When the woman and her muggers returned to the street, the green car was back, and the suspects jumped into it and disappeared towards Fourth Avenue.

Police are looking for a 5-foot-8, 200-pound black man, about 45, last seen wearing a black work jacket; and his accomplice, a 5-foot-7, 150-pound white man, about 25, who preferred a green

## 78 PCT BLOTTER

storked jacket.

The victim did not get a good look at the driver.

### Rob me now?

A Third Avenue glass manufacturer had one of its cellphones stolen on during the week of March 12, but didn't discover the theft until the thief had dialed up more than \$650 in calls.

The owner of the business, which is near First Street, told cops that the call-crazed perp took one of the company's office cellphones sometime between March 12 and March 19.

The phone has since been turned off.

### Double duty

Two Second Street apartments were broken into within a few days of each other last week, police records show.

On March 18, a 26-year-old woman called cops to report that someone had broken into her apartment, which is between Eighth Avenue and Prospect Park West, and stolen an iPod and a laptop computer.

Cops found no evidence of a break-in, leading them to believe that the perp had access to the building's keys, which are kept in a basement lockbox.

When cops went door-to-door

in the building, the victim's upstairs neighbor told them that her apartment had also been robbed "in the same manner," the report shows.

### Car gone

A man's Dodge sedan was stolen from a space on Park Place overnight on March 22.

The 55-year-old man told police that she had parked the car between Fifth and Sixth avenues at around 9:30 on March 21, but when she returned at 6:45 the next morning, the car was gone.

### No sleeping

A man who had consumed a drink or two too many got onto a Brooklyn-bound F train at Second Avenue in Manhattan only to wake up at the Seventh Avenue station in Park Slope to a

true nightmare: someone had cut open his pants pocket and stolen his wallet.

The suddenly sober victim — who lives on Ninth Street — told cops that he lost a Motorola cell phone, a wallet and various credit cards.

### Went fishing

This ain't no fish story: A woman had a fishing pole stolen out of her car on March 24.

She told cops that she had parked the car on Second Avenue near 12th Street at around 5 pm. When she returned to it the next day, she discovered that the lock on the passenger-side door had been broken and the trunk had been cleaned out.

In addition to the fishing pole, the woman lost \$60 and various ID cards.

### The ol' bar burg

A Staten Island woman dining in a popular Seventh Avenue bar in the wee hours of March 25 had her bag stolen after two men staged what only later appeared to be a staged diversion.

At around 1 am, the two men

— one black, one Hispanic, both around 18 years old — started yelling at each other.

With everyone's attention focused on the brouhaha, one of the perps was able to swipe the woman's bag as he ran out of the bar, which is at the corner of Seventh Street.

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## Big change at 'Hens'

By Nica Lalli  
The Brooklyn Paper

The name may be changing, but the Brooklyn Blackout Cake will remain the same.

Two Little Red Hens bakery on Eighth Avenue between 11th and 12th Streets is now the Ladybird Bakery — the result of an amicable split between longtime partners, Mary Louise Clemens and Christine Winkler.

In this smooth transition, Winkler gets the Upper East Side store and all the wholesale business, while Clemens retains the Brooklyn location.

"I am happy that I'll get to be here more," Clemens said.

Clemens gave the valuable "Little Red Hens" name to her partner of 12 years because she wanted to have a fresh start and a new look in Brooklyn.

The new name, she said, came from a contest she held. A ladybird, explained Clemens, a native of Texas, is what Southerners call a ladybug. In Texas, ladybirds fly through the bluebonnets (which is the state flower) so it is fitting that her new logo will have the bluebonnet and the ladybird on it.

Watch for her new sign in the next few weeks, and get that Easter order in today! Indeed, some things never change.

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# High crime: Man's stash is taken

By Matthew Lysiak  
and Michael Giardina  
The Brooklyn Paper

## 68th Precinct

A 22-year-old man was robbed by three men who took \$70, two bags of marijuana, and, apparently, their victim's common sense on March 10.

Police said the victim had been followed into the bathroom of a bar at Third Avenue and 92nd Street, where he was physically threatened by the three strangers as he was about to answer nature's call at 3:45 am.

The man told police he turned over the cash, and two plastic bags filled with pot. Cops are on the lookout for the perps, but didn't think too highly of the victim either.

"We should have arrested that man for stupidity," a police source said.

## No way home

The recent string of navigation system heists found another casualty on March 24.

In the third reported nap-wipe in the last nine days, a 26-year-old woman returned to her car at 5 pm only to discover her driver's-side door lock had been pulled out of

## POLICE BLOTTER

### Brass knuckles

A 16-year-old girl was sliced in the face by a perp with brass knuckles at the corner of Ridge Boulevard and 50th Street on March 12.

### Out of the closet

A 27-year-old woman returned to her Fort Hamilton Avenue apartment at 6:30 pm to discover that someone had raided her bedroom's closet and stolen more than \$4,000 in jewels on March 25.

### Wheels swiped

A new Mazda, valued at \$28,094, was stolen from in front of a house on Fourth Avenue near 76th Street on March 25, cops said.

### Thief nabbed

Cops nabbed a perp who swiped a woman's purse in a Bath Avenue grocery store on March 21.

### Unholy heist!

A Bay Parkway synagogue parishioner had her purse stolen on March 21 as she was praying. The woman was in the synagogue, which is near 79th Street, at around 10 am, but when she finished her rituals, she noticed that her bag — which contained \$2,500 and a cellphone — was gone.

### 68th Precinct

He was later picked-up. The woman had her belongings — including her newspaper — returned.

### Nightly theft

A woman came home to her 83rd Street apartment on March 22, to find her front door unlocked and nearly \$4,000 stolen, police said.

### Brain lock

A man returned to his 67th Street apartment on March 21 to find the front door open and his property gone.

### Dirty laundry

The man came back to his home, which is near New Utrecht Avenue, at around 10 am. He found more than \$600 missing, including jewelry, police said.

### Wallet fumble

The man failed to get a good look at the thief. A man's wife dropped his wallet while they were shopping in an 86th Street supermarket on March 23 — and the pair watched in horror as a fleet-footed female thief plucked it and ran.

### Old-timer swipe

An elderly woman was the victim of the old bump and run, when she had her wallet snatched as she was shopping in an 86th Street convenience store on March 23.

### Walrus fumble

The 76-year-old woman was in the store, which is near Bay 32nd Street, at around 1 pm, when she felt a bump from an unknown person. When she felt the store, she realized her wallet was gone, which contained \$45.

### Walrus fumble

The woman failed to get a good look at the thief. A man's wife dropped his wallet while they were shopping in an 86th Street supermarket on March 23 — and the pair watched in horror as a fleet-footed female thief plucked it and ran.

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## No Victory for FDNY

Ambulances will not go there anymore

By Matthew Lysiak  
The Brooklyn Paper

The FDNY will no longer send emergency ambulances to Victory Memorial Hospital — a decision that could doom the beleaguered hospital, days after local pals crowed that they had saved the troubled medical center's emergency room.

The surprising move goes into effect on April 1, and means that all 911 calls coming from Southwest Brooklyn on routes previously directed to Victory will now be routed either to Maimonides Medical Center in Borough Park or Lutheran Medical Center in Sunset Park.

The announcement raised the blood pressure of local officials who are questioning the sanity of taking Victory's three ambulances off the road while Southwest Brooklyn emergency rooms are already at full capacity.

"This is insane," said Councilman Vince Gentile (D-Bay Ridge), "Victory still has a working emergency room, certified EMTs, and working ambulances, and until that changes, I do not see why they cannot still provide ambulance service to Southwest Brooklyn."

Bill Guarinello, the acting chair of the Dyker Heights hospital's board of trustees, told The Brooklyn Paper on March 17 that local officials would soon be announcing that the medical center had found a partner to save its busy emergency room — but that an-

nouncement never came. "We are still in the process of looking for a partner and we have a couple of people at the table," said hospital spokesman Ronald DeFranco. "Obviously, this move takes one of our bargaining chips off the table."

DeFranco called the decision to pull Victory off the 911 call list "premature to say the least," and isn't sure the hospital will be able to survive the blow.

"At least 75 percent of our admissions are through the emergency room," DeFranco said. "We know for a fact that that number will go down. We just don't know how much."

Ambulances from competing hospitals are avoiding Victory, sometimes even if it is closer and the patient requests it, according to DeFranco.

"It is called pirating and we have received several complaints," he said. "Patients who are requesting our hospital are being told that Victory is closed and then taken to our competition."

With Victory's fleet of ambulances on the sidelines, another concern is that response times could be slower during emergencies, which could have deadly consequences.

"Patients who live in an area like 18th Avenue and 86th Street could face an additional four minutes to get to their emergency," said Ron Fedele, president of the Ben-Shimon Volunteer Ambulance Service, which itself is trying to overcome financial hardships

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## Correction

In our March 17 edition an article was accompanied by a three-year-old photo of Rep. Vito Fossella (R-Bay Ridge) handing a ceremonial check to officials of Victory Memorial Hospital, which later went bankrupt in part due to the poor management of one of the officials to whom Fossella was handing the check ("Victory finds partner"). We should have pointed out that the grant money in the 2004 picture had been allocated to support the hospital's emergency room, not the disgraced hospital official.

## LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that an Order entered by the Civil Court, Kings County on the 13th day of March, 2007, bearing Index Number N002142007, a copy of which may be examined at the Office of the Clerk, located at CTS COURT, KINGS COUNTY, 141 Livingston Street, Brooklyn, New York 11201, in room 802, grants me the right to assume the name of Catherine Morales. My present name is Catherine Morales Borillo. My present address is 249 - 40th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11220. My date of birth is August 12, 2006. (80212)

The Brooklyn Paper

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# KIDS THE TEENS SCHOOL Brooklyn Paper STYLE PARENT CAMPS MUSIC

## Writing the book on new haggadah

**DESPITE HER** agnostic Jewish upbringing on Manhattan's Upper West Side, Smartmom loves Passover, the only Jewish holiday her family ever celebrated.

And believe it or not, she's a real purist when it comes to that day. That's why she got a little nervous when someone sent her a copy of the "Haggadah for Buddhists and Jews."

Okay, everyone knows that Smartmom likes to practice Buddhist meditation on her bright red meditation pillow listening to the sounds of a sustained singing bowl drone from Thich Nat Hanh's Plum Village. But on Pesach?

Sure, Smartmom's family of origin rarely went to synagogue and didn't even light Hamukah candles — they actually celebrated Christmas, although both of her parents were Jewish.

But for Buddha's sake, Passover is Passover — and you don't mess with it.

Privately, as a child, Smartmom had intermittent longings to be more Jewish than her family. She secretly tried to fast on Yom Kippur — though she was rarely able to make it through the whole day.

During Passover, she tried to skip the Peppercorn Farm white bread in favor of matzo, but it was hard to resist the French toast her mother prepared for breakfast in the morning.

Smartmom has early memories of sitting with her mother's extended family at the large modern dining room table of their Riverside Drive apartment listening to her grandfather read from a Maxwell House haggadah.

Though less than 6, Smartmom could tell that something important was going on because her normally gentle grandfather adopted a dramatic tone that conveyed reverence and gravity. This night really was different from all other nights.

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## The answers are...

Here are the answers to our religion quiz on page 3.

- 1) Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
- 2) Kama Sutra, Yoga Sutra, Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, Laws of Manu, Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads, Mahabharata and Puranas.
- 3) The Koran.
- 4) Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
- 5) Life is suffering, suffering has an origin, suffering can be overcome (nirvana) and the path to overcoming suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path.
- 6) Ramadan is the Muslim holy month of fasting.
- 7) Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
- 8) Thou shalt have no other God but Me, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not lie, thou shalt not take the Lord's name in vain, thou shalt not worship graven images, thou shalt remember the Sabbath and keep it holy, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother.
- 9) "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of a religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."
- 10) No, it is not. The saying is Benjamin Franklin's and is directly contradicted by Proverbs 28:26, "He who trusts in himself is a fool."

**SMART mom**

By Louise Crawford



When Smartmom became an adult, she learned that there were as many styles of Passover Seders as there are Jews.

In college, she attended lefty Seders with a group of self-styled anarchists, Socialist Zionists, and atheists, who emphasized the struggles of all people to be free.

Later, when she became obsessed with the Holocaust, she attended a Seder, which incorporated the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and the words of Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel.

During a year-long sojourn in Israel, Smartmom celebrated a secular Passover in a Kibbutz dining hall with hundreds of kibbutzniks.

When she neared the age of 30, Smartmom's family Passover Seders stopped. Her parents were divorced, her grandparents were dead, and her cousins were developing new traditions with their own families.

Then, she married Hepcat, a WASP farm boy from northern California brought up as a Presbyterian by a mother who describes herself as an atheist.

**AFTER TEEN SPIRIT** and the Oh So Feisty One were born, Hepcat was open to as much Judaism as she wanted to dole out. He finds the whole religion thing to be an interesting adventure (Hepcat just loves to wear a yarmulke and prayer shawl at matzvas — and they are flattering on him).

Needless to say, it was up to Smartmom to "produce" the family's Seder. Whether they were having family, friends, or just themselves, she always led the Seder and selected the haggadah they were going to use.

While Smartmom's seders are a little offbeat, they do honor closely to certain traditions. Passover — from buying the matzo, the gefilte fish, the sickly sweet Muncieville wine; chopping apples and walnuts for the chorizo; roasting the brisket; setting the table with their best plates and silver and the Seder itself — is when Smartmom in-

still a modicum of Jewish tradition into her children.

So it was with some trepidation that Smartmom approached the "Haggadah for Jews and Buddhists," an attempt to express the universal theme of Passover to traditional Jews, Buddhists and people of diverse spiritual leanings. Yet Smartmom's trepidations melted away as she found herself intrigued by the idea of trying something new.

Right from the beginning, this haggadah, written by Elizabeth Pearce-Glassheim, speaks to the symbolic power of the holiday as it describes the enslavement of the Jews and their journey to freedom as a metaphor for consciousness and their striving for release from attachment towards spiritual growth.

Whoa. The age of the new-age Seder has really arrived.

While this haggadah is structurally the same as most Reform-style haggadahs and includes all the familiar sections, it's the language and interpretations that makes all the difference.

For example: "Passover embodies our desire to connect with all facets of our lives, to remember that we are spiritual beings having a human experience, and to help us to remember all the ways that we enslave ourselves when we are not deciding with our right mind and when we lapse into automatic, familiar thought patterns."

(Smartmom can almost hear Groovy Grandpa: "Where did you find this meshuganah haggadah?")

And then: "We enslave ourselves when we remain in the mitzvatim (the narrow path) of confusion and disconnection with our own and others' essential nature."

("What is this Passover or therapy?" Smartmom could imagine Diaper Diva saying.) Smartmom jumped ahead to the Four Questions, probably the most important part of the Seder for the way that it represents the Jewish tradition of questions and dialogue.

In this section, the author speaks directly to the traditional, the humanist or secular Jew, the Buddhist, and non-Jewish friends, a thought-provoking attempt to explain the universal meanings of Passover to a diverse group of people.

But as Smartmom read the haggadah, she recognized that her Buddhist self has everything to do with her secular Jewish self. Smartmom has found that meditation has provided her with her first experience of a divine power. Meditation offered her access to the universe, to God, to "whatever" — something she never felt in a synagogue.

And yet, her experience with Buddhist meditation has helped her to understand the meaning of prayer and reflection for Jews and others.

Practicing Buddhist meditation hasn't made Smartmom feel any less Jewish or any less capable of passing on Jewish history and my brand of secular Judaism to her children.

**NOT THE REALLY BIG question:** Does she want to integrate these two traditions and conduct a Seder using the "Haggadah for Jews and Buddhists?"

"Hell no," Teen Spirit said (he doesn't like change). "I like Passover just the way it is." Still, Smartmom thinks it's worth a try. If she can communicate Passover's message of freedom while conveying her growing interest in self-discovery and spiritual growth to Teen Spirit, OSFO, and even Hepcat, she says, "Why not?"

Whatever happens, it should, at the very least, provoke a great conversation over the gefilte fish. Haggadah for Jews and Buddhists, by Elizabeth Pearce-Glassheim (Modern Haggadah Distribution, 2006), can be downloaded for \$7 from [www.modernhaggadah.com](http://www.modernhaggadah.com).

Louise Crawford also writes the Web site, "Only the Jews know Brooklyn." Her upcoming "Blogfest" is on May 10.

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Bruce Ratner

## By Dana Rubinstein

The Brooklyn Paper

Bruce Ratner is buying the son of one of his fiercest opponents a Beemer.

The Atlantic Yards developer has settled a lawsuit filed by opponent Peter Williams after Williams' son was arrested for removing a Ratner-owned surveillance camera from a hallway in a building owned by Williams.

"I can't tell you how much we got," said Williams. "But Lars is looking to buy the most expensive BMW."

The family's building, on Sixth Avenue between Pacific and Dean streets, is within the Atlantic Yards footprint, but has not yet been acquired by Ratner. It sits adjacent to a Forest City Ratner-owned building, and the Williamses had allowed the development

company to use their hallway as an emergency exit.

But after a surveillance camera materialized in that same hallway, Lars Williams took it down. Later, he was arrested for it.

Upon his release, he and his father promptly filed a lawsuit in Manhattan Supreme Court against Ratner; his vice president, James Stuckey; and

Michael MacLach, who signed the police complaint against Williams. The lawsuit charged that Ratner had no right to install the camera on the Williamses' property or have Lars Williams arrested.

Forest City Ratner has refused to comment on the case and would not even confirm that it had been settled. But Peter Williams said the settlement

has been a financial boon for his son.

"Now, Lars can study cooking in London for three months," said Williams. "No one likes to be arrested. But if you can pay off your student loans and pay your lawyers' [\$28,000 legal] bill, worse things could happen."

"Lars is happy," added Williams. "In the final analysis, it was not a terrible thing."



Lars Williams

## Slope cop shot

By Dana Rubinstein and Christie Rizk  
The Brooklyn Paper

Flatbush Avenue was in lock-down and crawling with cops on Tuesday night after a gun-toting, pot-smoking criminal allegedly shot a police officer in the ankle less than two blocks from his 78th Precinct headquarters.

The officer, Rory Mangra, 27,



Rory Mangra

was taken to New York Methodist Hospital with a broken fibula. Police Commissioner Ray Kelly and Mayor Bloomberg rushed to his bedside, where they found Mangra in stable condition and expected to recover fully. He was released from the hospital on Wednesday.

Officers Mangra and Erik Merizalde were on patrol in an unmarked car at around 7:15 pm, when they spotted Kingsley Newland, 23, of Williamsburg, smoking a joint in front of a hair salon at 443 Dean St., cops said.

When Mangra left the car and approached his reefer-toking target, he sprinted toward Flatbush Avenue. Merizalde swung his car in front of the fugitive, who then dove over its hood, police said.

When Mangra, a former Marine, caught up to Newland, the perp allegedly pulled out a .22 caliber pistol from his waistband and shot the cop in the right ankle.

Cops say Newland tried to fire off another shot, but his gun jammed, allowing police to collar him.

In the haze of the moment, Newland then apologized to the cops, telling them, "I didn't mean it," according to Kelly.

The police shut down Flatbush, from Fourth to Seventh avenues, for at least two hours to conduct an investigation. Cops said they were hunting a man who may have been with Newland.

Newland was charged with attempted murder, assault, criminal use of a firearm, criminal possession of a weapon, and last, but not least, criminal possession of weed. He had been arrested at least seven times before, mostly for drug possession and sales, police said.

On Wednesday, residents of the block weren't surprised by the police report of a man smoking pot in their midst.

"It happens," said one man leaving a bodega. "It's not that big a deal."

At the Methodist Hospital press conference Bloomberg said just the opposite, praising the officers for going after Newland after spotting him with the joint.

And both he and Kelly sought to reassure Park Slope that the neighborhood is safe.

"Crime here in the 78th Precinct is down 11 percent so far this year, and the only other shooting in this precinct this year was of another police officer, Andrew Suarez," said Kelly, referring to the Feb. 10 incident in which another cop from the 78th Precinct was shot while in patrol in Park Slope.

## Ratner correction

An article on Bruce Ratner's huge lobbying expenses ("Ratner's lobby hobby," March 24) misidentified what the Healthcare Association of New York State is. The organization represents more than 550 non-profit and public hospitals, nursing homes, home care agencies, and other health care organizations throughout New York State. The Brooklyn Paper regrets the error.

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